

REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 9-13, 17, and 19-21 remain in the application. Claims 1 and 17 have been amended to more distinctly claim embodiments of the invention. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections -- 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7, 9-13, 17, and 19-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over US 6,251,759 to Guo et al. ("Guo") in view of US 5,281,320 to Turner et al ("Turner") and US 6,270,582 to Rivkin et al. ("Rivkin"). The aforementioned three references being combined to reject the instant claims are referred to herein as the "Guo/Turner/Rivkin combination."

The last office action reads Turner's vacuum chuck 60 as a pedestal in a single-wafer load lock 12. As a preliminary matter, vacuum chuck 60 does not support a wafer thereon as required by claim 1. In Turner, vacuum chuck 60 is employed to pull a wafer into load lock 12, not to support the wafer in the load lock. In fact, vacuum chuck 60 withdraws after the wafer is brought into load lock 12 (Turner, column 12, lines. 20-37). It is respectfully submitted that those of ordinary skill in the art will not deem Turner's vacuum chuck 60 as a load lock pedestal. Nevertheless, to expedite prosecution of the present application, independent claims 1 and 17 have been amended to recite that the load lock supports the wafer during a pump down of the load lock. Turner's vacuum chuck 60 does not support a wafer thereon during a pump down of the load lock 12. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 17 are patentable over the Guo/Turner/Rivkin combination.

Claims 1 and 17 are further patentable over the Guo/Turner/Rivkin combination at least for reciting: "a loader configured to receive a plurality of wafers to be processed" and "a robot configured to transfer a wafer between the load-lock and the loader, the robot being exposed to atmosphere." Guo, Turner, Rivkin, or their combination does not disclose or suggest a wafer processing architecture as recited in claims 1 and 17.

Claims 2-7 and 9-13 depend on claim 1. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 2-7 and 9-13 are patentable over the Guo/Turner/Rivkin combination at least for the same reasons that claim 1 is patentable, as well as because of the combination of features set forth in these claims and in claim 1.

Claims 19-21 depend on claim 17. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 19-21 are patentable over the Guo/Turner/Rivkin combination at least for the same reasons that claim 17 is patentable, as well as because of the combination of features set forth in these claims and in claim 17.

Double Patenting

Claims 1-7, 9-13, 17, and 19-21 stand rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over US 6,431,807 to Stevens et al. ("Stevens") in view of Guo. Applicants will file a terminal disclaimer if the instant claims are deemed allowable.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-7, 9-13, 17, and 19-21 are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112 for any questions.

If for any reason an insufficient fee has been paid, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the insufficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-2427.

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Docket No. 10001.000600 (NVLS 379)
Response To Office Action
December 15, 2003

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: December 15, 2003

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